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1793 started up as armed men ; and it was they who put money into the purse, and rallied thousands under the banner of the International. Without faith in themselves or their cause, they could not be expected to inspire others with faith ; but it was unnecessary for them to lie as they did, to save their lives at the cost of honor, or to demand sacrifices which they knew to be useless. The evil that they did lived after them, in the demoralization of the National Guard and of the regular army, in the blunders of the National Assembly, in the pusillanimity of the Mayors, whose capitulation they should have signed, since it was their work.

A. S. HILL.

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ART. V. — BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSEN AS A DRAMATIST.

“IN the childhood of time,” says the Danish poet Hauch, “the bard always came after the hero, and Mnemosyne, Memory, as the ancient Greeks have expressed it, was the mother of the Muses.” In other words, the age of great political events is not the age of song ; but in the calm that follows the storm, the poet will lift up his voice and will be sure to be heard. In the beginning of this century Norway’s political greatness had long been a thing of the past. The lurid sun of St. Olaf’s, Haken Hakenson’s, and the Viking age had set in bloody splendor, and the nation slept like a bear in his winter den. And like the bear it may be said to have “sucked its paw,” to have fed on the great memories of its heroic past, gloomily regardless of the dreary emptiness of the present. But it could not long remain thus. When the war-shouts of Napoleon’s armies and the general rising of European nations after his downfall had roused the Norseman from his slumber, and awakened him to a keen consciousness of the unworthiness of his present condition, he felt again the old Viking blood flowing in his veins ; he rubbed his drowsy eyes, stretched his athletic frame, and with one bold, well-directed blow crushed the shackles of foreign despotism. On the 17th of May, 1814, delegates from all the districts of Norway met at Eidsvald, wrought out a new constitution, declared themselves a

free and independent nation, and pledged their hands and their hearts to the preservation of the liberty which they had regained. A few months later (November 4, 1814) they entered upon a voluntary union with their brother-land, Sweden, and elected Bernadotte (Carl XIV. Johan) their king, having first received his oath to respect the laws, rights, and liberty of their country. The other European nations were fortunately too busy with their own affairs to trouble themselves about the doings of the Norwegians, and the Constitution of 1814 remains inviolate until this day.

Now, then, was the time to look for the great poet; and there was also a general expectation at that time that something truly great was soon to appear. But the general state of social culture was as yet so low, and society itself such a chaos of unassimilated and irreconcilable elements, that it must be deemed a fortunate circumstance that some twenty years elapsed before this great phenomenon did make its appearance. But even then the political questions were the all-absorbing topics of the day, and the poet, who should embody the poetical genius of the age, would necessarily have to assume the colors of the one or the other of the political factions. And both Henrik Wergeland and his great opponent, J. S. C. Welhaven (although the latter repudiated the idea), were so thoroughly imbued with the principles of political partisanship, that hardly the half of their lifetime sufficed to deliver them from the unnatural shackles which embarrassed them, and to develop the full and harmonious proportions of their naturally great geniuses. Wergeland was by nature a radical, and moreover so intoxicated with the new and world-wide idea of liberty, that instead of becoming the poet of his own age and nation, he lost himself in vague, half-symbolic visions of the future, and in a strangely erratic life came wellnigh forfeiting the splendid gifts with which Providence had endowed him. Welhaven, on the other hand, represented the very opposite extreme of social and poetical limitation. While Wergeland enthusiastically hugged to his breast (both literally and metaphorically speaking) every man who could boast a drop of the Viking blood in his veins, Welhaven fastidiously wrinkled his nose at the ill-odor and vulgar ways of the democratic plebeian. While the former,

conscious only of the vastness of his power, hurled forth with thundering magnificence his shapeless, heaven-reaching visions, the latter, like a cool-headed, clear-sighted critic, weighed, modelled, and remodelled his phrase, and carefully measured the æsthetic value of his thoughts, both as they mutually affected each other and in their relation to the grand *ensemble* of the poem. The result in both cases may be easily imagined. Wergeland's bequest to posterity, consisting of lyrics, epics, dramas, and prose sketches, is a huge and strangely chaotic mass, grand indeed, and still aglow with the fiery conception that gave it life, but withal vague, cloudy, and uncomfortable, like the world of Genesis before the hand of the Creator had separated the dry land from the sea. Welhaven's lyrics, as well as his critical writings, have long held the first rank among the classics of his nation; the very fact that he knew so well the nature of his gifts, and never for a moment overstepped the proper limits of his genius, has enabled him to achieve a high degree of perfection within his own peculiar province. He is a living proof of Goethe's famous utterance: "In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister."

The romantic poetry won a comparatively easy victory in Germany, and with champions like Goethe, Schiller, Tieck, Lessing, and Novalis, what power could be strong enough to arrest its progress? Not so in the Scandinavian countries. There the forces were more equally divided, and the battle consequently was a far severer one. In Sweden the French classical Academists had to sustain a grievous fight against the romantic "Phosphorism" (as this movement was styled after its journal the "Phosphorus"), which at length in the person of Peter Amadeus Atterbom ascended the throne of poetical supremacy. In Denmark the fierce feud between Baggesen and Oehlenschläger also ended with the deposition of the former as well as the school he represented, and the latter for half a century reigned supreme in the literary republic of the North, and in the cathedral of Lund, June 23, 1829, even formally received the laurel crown from the hands of his great brother poet, Esaias Tegnér. In both these cases the struggle was between an established and a rising school, between clear and well-defined, but diametrically opposed, principles; in Norway, however, there was

hardly any old school to depose; and the great public, feeling its inability to pronounce upon the literary questions at issue, attached an undue importance to the political creeds of the combatants, and allowed their political sentiments to decide their preference of one or the other of the contending poets. Soon all the academical youth of the country stood armed on the two opposing sides, and with the impetuosity peculiar to their race longed to have matters arranged and settled by a real battle, not with quills, but with bare fists and honest blows. Such a battle was actually fought in 1836 at the appearance of one of Wergeland's dramas, *Campbellune*, on the stage of the Christiania Theatre, and resulted in the utter defeat of Welhaven's partisans. It was, as every one will admit, a highly original method of testing poetical merit, and can only be accounted for by the afore-mentioned fact, that the public saw in these two young men the mouthpieces of the two political parties rather than the founders of opposing schools within the national literature.

We have dwelt at some length upon the political situation in Norway previous to Björnson's appearance, that the reader may be enabled to view him in his relation to the time in which and for which he worked, and thereby gain a clearer idea of the importance of the work he has done and is still doing.

Björnstjerne Björnson was born December 8, 1832, in the parish of Ovikne, a wildly picturesque region among the mountains of Dovre. If it be true that a glowing patriotism is more naturally fostered under the solemn shadow of the mountains than in the sunshine of the blooming plains, we cannot wonder that this decided "Norseism," which so early distinguished Björnson as a writer, has ever remained the most prominent characteristic of his whole public and private career. Björnson is a Norseman to the core, and even if he had never attained the high rank he now holds as a poet and dramatist, his journalistic and political character would have stamped him as a typical Norseman. While Björnson was yet a child, his father, who was a clergyman, removed to Romsdal, a valley in the northern part of Norway, which deserved its fame among tourists and artists for the picturesque contrasts between the boldness of sculpture in its mountain forms and the loveliness

of its cool transparent fjords. When twelve years of age, our poet was sent to the State Gymnasium at Molde, a small town situated on the Atlantic shore, not far from his father's parish. We cannot forbear here to relate an anecdote, which we have from one who was at that time on terms of acquaintance with him. It may seem trifling; yet as, to the best of our knowledge, it has never before appeared in print, and since accounts of that period of the poet's life are scarce, we think we need make no excuse for telling it. One day, during his school life, Björnson entered the house of a merchant whose family he was in the habit of visiting. Seeing the portrait of the poet Wergeland on the wall over the sofa, he stopped before it and stood viewing it long and earnestly. On being asked what he was thinking about, he pointed to the portrait and answered, that the time would surely come when he too should be "hung up" like him. If this incident is authentic, Björnson cannot, even at that early age, have been so destitute of ambition as most of his biographers have asserted. It cannot be doubted, however, that his progress in classic lore was anything but satisfactory. His *naïveté* and unsophisticated straightforwardness made him the common butt of the jests and witticisms of the school, and the discouraging reports of his teachers induced his parents to think seriously of breaking off his unprofitable studies and sending him to sea. But fortunately this design was thwarted, and for several years more he had to endure the monotonous life of the Gymnasium; which, however, made him appreciate the more the glorious liberty of his vacations, when he could roam at his ease through the lonely wilds of Romsdal's mountains, catch trout in the freshets, and dream away the sunny summer days on the fjord. His exuberance of animal spirits at this time manifested itself in the most extraordinary manner; he found a rare amusement in turning summersaults on everything which came in his way, and not unfrequently exercised his revolutionary spirit on the tables, chairs, and other furniture of his father's parsonage. No wonder his mother thought that the sea was his proper calling.

Having finished his preparatory studies, Björnson started for Christiania, where he passed the examination required for admission to the University. But his head was now so full of

literary projects, that he could find no time to avail himself of the privileges to which this examination entitled him. His first drama, *Valborg*, was accepted by the directors of the stage, and procured for its author a free ticket to all theatrical representations; and through the opportunity he thus gained of acquainting himself with the requirements of the drama, he was soon convinced of the immaturity of his production, and of his own accord withdrew it, without awaiting the verdict of the public. His continued visits to the theatre soon enabled him to see the unworthy condition of the national stage of the capital; and with more patriotic zeal than critical judgment, in a series of newspaper articles, he boldly attacked the Danish rule as anti-national in its origin and tendencies. This attack provoked an equally bitter reply; and little by little, as the combat progressed, the theatre-going public, which included nearly three fourths of the whole population, began to organize into two hostile camps, and some eager enthusiasts among the collegians were already preparing to *conserere manus*. But the more peaceable citizens of Christiania had probably no desire to see the shocking scenes of 1836 \* renewed, and after some light skirmishing, some of which was of a pugilistic character, order was again restored. The quarrel was dropped, but not forgotten; it was destined to bear a rich literary harvest in years to come.

Then came the great University reunion of 1856. The Norwegian and Danish students and graduates, as well as undergraduates, set out on a grand expedition to meet their Swedish brethren at Upsala. Here Björnson caught the first glimpse of a greater and freer life than moved within the narrow horizon of Norway's capital. This gay and careless student life, this cheerful abandonment of all the artificial shackles which burden one's feet in their daily walks through a half-aristocratic society, the temporary freedom which allows one without offence to toast the prince and hug a count to his bosom, — all this had its influence upon Björnson's sensitive nature; it filled his soul with a happy intoxication, and with confidence in his own strength and work. And having once tasted a life like

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\* The fight between the partisans of Wergeland and Welhaven.

this, he could not return to what he had left behind him. The following winter he therefore betook himself to Copenhagen, where he spent about half a year of great literary activity. The beautiful tale *Synnöve Solbakken*, and the grand dramas *Mellem Slagene* (Between the Battles) and *Halte Hulda* (Limping Hulda) owe their existence to the awakening influences of the Upsala expedition and the subsequent sunny life in Copenhagen, where the good-natured Danes willingly granted him the recognition which, at this stage of his literary life, was one of the first conditions of growth.

On his return to Norway he published *Synnöve Solbakken*; first in an illustrated weekly, which he temporarily edited, and the following year in book form. The tale, short and simple as it was, attracted general attention, both as being the first successful effort to introduce the primitive life of the Norse peasantry into the world of fiction, and because it revealed a great and rich poetic soul, of a cast altogether grand and strikingly original. There was, moreover, a certain nervous strength in the narrative; which, whatever might be said of its provincialisms and occasional obscurity of expression, seemed to indicate an immense reserve power; and the artless simplicity of the style betokened the author's perfect confidence in the intelligence of his readers, — a feature which never fails to bring its own reward with a sincere and enlightened public. In Denmark, where the book was reprinted, it was received with even greater and more decided favor; and, indeed, the sterling qualities of Björnson's writings have always appealed in a forcible manner to the æsthetic sense of the Danes, and have prepared him a series of triumphs altogether unprecedented, since the days of Oehlenschläger, in the literary annals of Scandinavia.

In the following year (1858) appeared the tale *Arne*, — of all the author's work, perhaps, the one best known to the English-speaking public, — and the two dramas, *Halte Hulda* and *Mellem Slagene*, all distinguished by the same transcendent merits which had already secured Björnson so high a rank among contemporaneous men of letters. It may be worthy of notice, that he here followed Shakespeare's example in violating sacred Aristotelean unities of time and place, and he even limits the number of acts in one case to three, and in another



to two. The untraditional shape of Björnson's dramas gave little trouble to Scandinavian critics, and did not subject them to the harsh treatment which probably they would have met with at the hands of the French and German members of that powerful brotherhood.

The later events of Björnson's life may be briefly told. Immediately following the publication of his dramas came his appointment to the "artistic directorship" of the national stage in Bergen, — which position he held for about two years. Here at last he found an opportunity for carrying into effect his peculiar ideas as to the character of the national drama, and, as the future proved, gave no small impulse to the development of the histrionic art in Norway. The Bergen theatre had come into existence some ten or twelve years before Björnson assumed the leadership of its stage, through the persevering efforts and noble generosity of Ole Bull; who cordially shared our author's enthusiasm for everything that was truly "Norse." It has ever since done excellent service, especially as a recruiting school from which the Christiania theatres might constantly supply their vacancies, and thus gradually bring about the change in favor of nationalization, which never could have been accomplished through any sudden revolutionary stratagem. It is Bergen which has the honor of having first discovered the great tragic heroine Mrs. Gundersen, the inimitable Mrs. Wolf, and the famous comedian, Johannes Brun, — all of whom now adorn the stage of the capital.

From Bergen Björnson was called to the editorship of *Aftenbladet*, the second political journal of Norway; but having soon become convinced that journalism was not his *forte*, again relinquished this position, and in the spring of 1860 started for Italy. Previous to his departure, however, he published, through the famous house Gyldendal, in Copenhagen, a volume entitled *Smaastykker* (Sketches); of which, "A Happy Boy," and the masterly tale "The Father," are familiar to American readers. One of these sketches, *Ei Faarleg Friing* (A Dangerous Wooing), was written in the popular dialect of his native valley. The year of his return (1862) may be said to mark an epoch in the literary history of the Scandinavian races; for after the publication of the grand drama "King

Sverre" and the wonderful trilogy "Sigurd Slembe," the subjects of which were taken from Snorre Sturlason's "Sagas of the Kings of Norway," the national drama was no longer a mere vague ideal or an imaginary promise of the future, but a grand and powerful reality, which even the most reluctant of critics were forced to recognize. Björnson now assumed the leadership of the Christiania theatre; and, as a reward for his great services to Norwegian literature, the *Storting*, or Parliament, granted him an annual "Poet's salary." Since then he has held an undisputed rank as the greatest poet of Scandinavia. His works have been issued in numerous editions in the capitals of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark; translations have appeared in English, German, and French; and his dramas have been the chief attraction of the theatres all over the Scandinavian kingdoms. Of late years he has been engaged in editing the political and literary paper, *Folkebladet* (The People's Journal), and has from time to time delighted the public with poetical productions bearing the stamp of his powerful genius. In the drama "Mary Stuart in Scotland" he has for the first time chosen a foreign subject for his treatment, and has perhaps "Norsified" it more than the kinship of Norsemen and Scotch Highlanders would naturally justify; the play enjoyed the rare fortune of being set to music by the Norwegian composer, Richard Norderaak (who died in the following year), — a circumstance to which undoubtedly it partly owed its success. In "The Fisherm maiden" the author drew largely on the fund of experience he had gained as artistic director of the two principal theatres of the land; and rumor says that the motive of the tale was suggested by the life of a certain well-known actress, at present the favorite of the Christiania public. If the rumor be true, the reader need no more be disappointed at the abrupt ending of "The Fisherm maiden"; for "the curtain rose" over a life full of triumphs, worthy of the genuineness of Petra's artistic nature. *De Nygifte* (After the Wedding) is a short dramatic sketch full of truth and pathos, dealing with social life at the present day. The last work we have seen from Björnson's pen is the epic poem *Arnliot Gelline* (published 1870), describing the life, conversion, and death of a Norse warrior of the old Viking breed. Like Tegnér's *Frithof*

*Saga*, and Kristofer Janson's *Sigmund Bresteson*, it is written in cantos of different form and metre, and is characterized by a certain rude and honest strength, which, we suppose, would be more readily appreciated by the original Norsemen than by those who know the spirit of the Sagas only from cursory extracts and translations. The poet is here liable to criticism for the liberties he takes with his verse, often breaking off in the middle of a stanza, and introducing his rhymes, as it seems, very much at random; moreover his fondness for compressed vigor often makes his poetic similes extremely obscure. A Danish reviewer, noticing this fault, very justly remarks that Björnson's images seem to be one step removed from the pantomime. A complete edition of his poems has lately been issued by the house Gyldendal, in Copenhagen.

We have seen that Björnson's works comprise almost all the more important branches of literary art; but as it is more especially his dramas whose influence has made itself so widely felt among his own nation, we propose in the present article to subject these to a critical examination. As a specimen, we have chosen *Halte Hulda* (Limping Hulda), which, although belonging to an early period of the author's life, is marked with all the characteristics of his style, and moreover possesses the advantage of being intelligible even to those who have never had a peep into the mysteries of the old Sagas. The action is laid in the thirteenth century, — when the political power of Norway was in steady decline; when the *Asa* faith had long been supplanted by a nominal Christianity; while the old pagan customs, and the old notions of revenge, manliness, and honor still held as powerful a sway over the minds of the Norsemen as in the days when the law of the *Althing* and the fixed rites of religion provided for the emergencies thence arising. The time, then, nearly coincides with that of *Njal's Saga*; with which, indeed, *Halte Hulda* has many traits in common, — of course with due allowance for the natural differences between a drama and an historical tale.

A dramatic as well as a tragical situation always involves a conflict; it is the individual asserting his freedom as opposed to some greater power beyond and above him. In the ancient Greek dramas, this Destiny is an external and arbitrary power,

which the hero only recognizes because he is forced to do so, while his moral nature may silently rebel against it. But how infinitely more powerful or how much more *tragic* \* does not the situation become where this limiting power, this Destiny — or perhaps *Necessity* is the better word — is no longer an interference from without, but is found in man's own moral consciousness. This circumstance Björnson has fully appreciated ; it is the corner-stone in this as in many of his other dramas. Aslak, the father of the murdered Gudlejk, is old, and shrinks from the duty of vengeance, which his own conscience enforces. He knows that Eyolf Finson, the slayer of his son, is the greatest warrior in the king's body-guard, and that death is certain if he attacks him. Therefore when his sister, Halgerda, throws the red cloak of the avenger about his shoulders, he says, "O Jesus Lord, methinks that there thou laid'st my shroud upon me."

But the old pagan idea, which still clings to him, declares him a villain if he flees from the terrible duty. And he struggles, strikes, and is slain.

Numerous second-rate dramatists in Germany have attempted to transplant the Greek notion of Destiny upon Christian ground, and the result has been dramatic monstrosities like Zacharius Werner's "The Twenty-fourth of February," and Dr. Müllner's "King Yngurd"; where the whole machinery turns upon some inevitable doom, attached to a certain day of a certain month, or some mysterious curse attendant upon some slight and insignificant action. The poor success of these scribblers has induced Carlyle to reject the idea of destiny as altogether inapplicable in the Christian drama; † and as understood by Æschylus and Sophocles it may no longer appeal to the æsthetic sense of the age, while in the wider signification of moral *Necessity* it is the very essence of dramatic composition.

We have said that Christianity has essentially changed the

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\* Schegel observes: "We are accustomed to give to all terrible and sorrowful events the appellation of *tragic*, . . . though a melancholy conclusion is by no means indispensably necessary" (in a tragedy).

† "German Playwrights," Carlyle's Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, Phillips, Sampson, & Co., Boston, 1855.

attitude of the hero ; that the tragical Necessity, instead of being, as with the Greeks, an arbitrary and inexorable Fate, has taken up its abode in his own heart, as a part of his being, an all-governing law for his thoughts and actions. But the age of the old Norse Sagas, lying, as it were, midway between Christianity and paganism, has established a peculiar code of its own. The old loyalty to Odin and Thor has vanished, but Christ the White has not yet taken their place ; he is looked upon as a powerful helper rather than as a stern master ; not as the unrelenting judge of good and evil, but as a mild, protecting Deity, who might easily be conciliated to further the warrior's ambitious designs. The code of morality for centuries remained that of the old heathen age. If the law did not enforce vengeance, society practically outlawed the man who neglected to whet his sword at his kinsman's death. The hero's chief end and aim was glory and an honorable name among men ; and a bloody death seemed to him far preferable to a life of dishonor. And, through long habit and tradition, this regard for society and "honor among men" became so deeply ingrafted in the Norseman's mind, that it became a part of himself, and amounted to nothing less than an "inward necessity," which thus with him occupied a place very similar to that of religious duty with the Christian. The reader of *Njala* and *Trereyinga Saga* will readily convince himself of this ; and without a right understanding of the state of society at that time, many of the finest scenes in *Halte Hulda* will lose their tragical import. The plot is indeed in itself grand, and as such appeals alike to the savant and the unlearned ; and its passionate outbursts of grief, hatred, and love are such as will find a response in every human breast. At the same time a more thorough acquaintance with the customs and moral conceptions of the age will reveal many an exquisite touch of coloring and many a delicately sculptured figure with fine tintings and half-tintings of character, which require more than a cursory reading to yield their full measure of enjoyment. Then there is a certain rich flavor of antiquity, a fleeting, luminous haze, which ever agreeably puzzles the mind, and, without obscuring its horizon, keeps the curiosity ever alert.

The *dramatis personæ* are few, and the complications of the

plot not hard to unravel. It is characteristic of the author that he never depends upon complexity of intrigue for effect ; he never shrinks from great psychological problems, but scorns to resort to mere ingenious intricacies. Hulda, the heroine, is the widow of Gudlejk Aslakson, who has been slain only a few days ago by the king's warrior, Eyolf Finson. There is a mystery about her, a strange, fatal charm, which is thus described by Halgerda, the murdered man's kinswoman : —

“ When yet a child, a weird old Finnish dame,  
Who saw her sitting from the dance afar,  
Weeping full sore, because her foot was lame,  
And that she could not mingle in the dance,  
Thus spake to her: ‘ Weep not, that thou art lame;  
For in return thou shalt a visage have,  
Which shall be death to him who looks  
Too long upon it.’ — Sooth she spoke the truth.”

In Aslak's race, where she has been fostered, five valorous men have gazed too long upon this visage, and in every case the prophecy has come true ; not that she slew them : no, to her the one was no better than the other ; but the fatal charm of her beauty inflamed the one against the other ; the rejected wooer naturally believed his rival more successful ; and through jealousy and hatred the brother became the brother's death. At last she is forced to marry Gudlejk ; but ere the year is past she meets Eyolf Finson of the king's body-guard. No word is exchanged, only their eyes meet, the charm works, and Gudlejk's fate is decided. But that look is no less fatal to Hulda's peace than it is to Eyolf's. All the great dormant powers of her nature are awakened to life, and she feels herself suddenly a woman, loving and beloved. And this new love, the first and only one of her joyless life, whispers its alluring tale of happiness in her ear, and, inspired with tenfold strength, she rises to crush every obstacle which obstructs her way.

At the opening of the first act the stage represents an old Norwegian *skaal*, or hall, the long smoky rafters overhead, the broad hearth of stone in the middle of the floor, and the burnished shields and weapons adorning the walls. Halgerda, Gudlejk's kinswoman, and Thordis, a young girl of seventeen summers, who, like Hulda, has been fostered in her house, occupy the foreground ; both sewing on a red mantle, destined

for Gudlejk's avenger. Halgerda tries to turn the conversation on the murdered man, but Thordis shrinks from the thought of blood, and uses every device to dispel the gloom which broods over her mind. She speaks of her lover, Gunnar, — of his manliness and beauty, and of the joy she felt at being borne across the brook on his strong arm. Halgerda answers: —

. . . . Ah, if to me

A valorous swain his troth had pledged —

THORDIS.

What then?

HALGERDA.

Full well I know what prize I then should bid him.

THORDIS.

A trail of blood thy thought!

HALGERDA.

Perchance because

A bloody house it was from whence it rose.

THORDIS.

Always the vision dread!

HALGERDA.

And dost thou think

That Gudlejk seemeth fair, as there he lies?

THORDIS.

Halgerda, peace! No longer can I bear

Thy ugly talk.

HALGERDA.

Aha!

THORDIS.

Methinks I now perceive

Thy race from Iceland came.

HALGERDA.

And I perceive

That thine is not that race.

THORDIS.

May God be praised!

In the characters of Halgerda and Thordis, we note the author's fine sense of the picturesque, and his skill in truly dramatic characterization. What could more powerfully relieve the revengeful gloom of the former's mind than the

fresh, half-shrinking happiness of a young maid's new-born love? It is not a mere rude contrast, such as every mechanical scribbler could readily have invented, nor an often-repeated antithesis, which wearies more than it delights, but a vigorous and truthful delineation of two typical characters, which, although old as the world, gain a fresh charm in the peculiar coloring of the old Norse Sagas, and in their relation to that age which the Sagas depict. The Danish poet, Hauch, whom we have already quoted, observes, that the women of the Sagas, when once in sympathy with the spirit of the age, soon surpass the men in fierceness and bloodthirstiness; they spur their sense of honor, and ever urge them on to deeds of violence and vengeance. Their very seclusion and the innate reserve of their nature, if once broken, seem to foster an increased bitterness and vehemence, which know no bounds and shun no obstacle to the fulfilment of their desire. Halgerda's namesake, in *Njal's Saga*, and *Njal's* wife, *Bergthora*, give sufficient evidence of this. Where, on the other hand, happiness and love preserve the natural sweetness of her character, the old Norse woman takes the very opposite part, tempering the wrath of her husband, soothing his passions, and surrounding him with all those gentle influences which gradually alienate him from his native barbarism. She is sprightly, roguish, and tender like *Thordis*; and like *Thordis* scatters an enlivening ray of sunshine upon her gloomy surroundings.

In the second scene Halgerda throws the blood-red mantle around her brother *Aslak's* shoulders; and when he hesitates to undertake the duty it imposes upon him, she bids him sleep in the room where his son was murdered. He goes, and Halgerda and *Thordis* are again alone.

HALGERDA.

At midnight hour, they say,  
The house is haunted.

THORDIS.

Hear us, snow-white Christ!  
And be Thou with us.

HALGERDA.

Oft, methinks, I heard,  
That never *Aslak* found the man who stood,  
When once his sword began to play around him.



THORDIS (*frightened*).

Now I must go. . . .

HALGERDA.

To Gunnar ?

THORDIS.

Yes.

HALGERDA.

Thou hast

A message for him ? \*

THORDIS (*hesitates*).

HALGERDA.

Seek'st a gift as pledge ?

THORDIS.

O, be not angry . . . . though thy cause be just !  
I trow . . . . nay, well I know, that such intent  
Were great in sooth . . . . and of a Northland maid  
Full worthy . . . . and . . . . but I . . . . although I know . . . .  
I can but weep . . . . shame on the naughty tears !  
Unworthy are they of my race . . . . and still  
I am so frightened . . . . O, let me but go,  
I am afraid !

HALGERDA (*gently*).

Be calm !

THORDIS (*on her knees*).

O, let me go !

My heart is still so faint . . . . if thou wouldst plant  
So strong a purpose there, it well may sprout,  
But burst the vessel ; ah, so frail it is !

HALGERDA (*as before*).

Go, Thordis.

THORDIS (*rising ; still frightened*).

Art thou angry ?

HALGERDA.

Go, I say !

THORDIS.

I thank thee ! — but . . . . art thou not angry then ?

HALGERDA.

If thou wilt go, hie thee, ere Hulda comes.

\* It may not be clear from the passage quoted, that Halgerda wishes Thordis to demand of her lover that he shall take vengeance upon Gudlejk's slayer, and that she shall make this the condition of her love.

THORDIS (*drawing nearer*).

Yes, I shall go ; but thou must tell me first  
If thou forgivest me and art not angry.  
For scarce a fortnight old is yet our bliss, —  
Too young for plans like thine, it gayly leaps  
With song and sport around the birchen grove,  
It gathers flowerets and snatches kisses,  
It puts up snares, and hears the song of birds,  
Recounteth legends, plays at hide-and-seek  
Where roguish shrubs have closed the copse above us.

HALGERDA (*embracing her with warmth*).

O sunny soul, I know thee once again !  
(*Earnestly.*)  
O, that he might reward thee for thy faith !

THORDIS.

In every little nut I offer thee  
A worm straightway thou findest.

HALGERDA.

Ah, my child !  
Perchance because I found . . . well, mind not me —  
Be happy ! — Go ! — To-night she comes full early !

#### FOURTH SCENE.

HALGERDA and THORDIS. HULDA (*enters slowly as in deep thought*).

THORDIS (*to HALGERDA*).

Of late, methinks, I hardly see her limping.

HALGERDA (*to THORDIS*).

Nay, not as heretofore. She will not own it.  
At every step she takes she chokes a scream  
Of wildest pain ; for so it hurts to keep  
The infirm ankle straight, lest it should yield.

In the subsequent brief conversation between Hulda and Halgerda, the former's power becomes strangely manifest. Halgerda rebels in her heart against her commands, but is silent and obeys. She leaves, and steals into the room, where Aslak, her brother, sleeps. The following soliloquy of Hulda's, a part of which we translate, is the exulting cry of a strong and lofty nature, — a nature hitherto shackled, lone, and subdued, but now for the first time free to gaze with fearless eye upon the life that is dawning upon it. She is waiting for her

lover, Eyolf Finson ; with whom, since her husband's death, she has had several interviews, although until then they had been strangers.

## HULDA.

He never comes till I have quenched the candle.

*(Blows out the candle, and walks up toward the foreground.)*

Of late was all the world so small, so narrow,

That scarce one of all my silent wishes

Found room in it, — but at that time, in sooth,

It still had room for all these men and women.

Now like a vision, in a moment's time —

O miracle! — so wide and large 't is grown,

Nay, so immeasurable, that my soul

Is quenched in the very thought to grasp it.

And now — now can the great wide earth but hold

An only one — and all the rest, they stand

And bar his entrance . . . . *(Speaking low.)* Methinks, erewhile I had

A word for each of them, an ear to listen

To their whisper. *(With rising energy.)* But if now at once

The voice of each into an ocean's roar

Together flowed, I had no ear to hear it.

*(Tenderly.)* O wonderful! yon silent wood, yon mount

Which dreams within its cloud, has gained a tongue ;

Yon fruit-encumbered green, whose voice is bound,

Full steeped in rapture at its own sweet bliss,

It mildly speaks to me . . . . and I do listen.

*(Takes a seat, slowly.)*

'T was here I sat, — and as I sat the darkness

Came with its whisper to me ; full warily

It wrapped my bosom close, — *(pensively)*, and people, manor-house,

And all the past with muffled, anxious cries

Did perish in it. *(With rising energy.)* Here once more I sat.

Oh! then of joy a beacon in my mind

Was lit, — a pure and radiant one, that grew

And higher rose, and leapt like wildest flame,

And earth and sky encompassed! But I clasped

Hard o'er my breast my hands, — and I was silent.

— And full and heavy with this load of joy,

Of light and shimmer weary, could my eye

No longer choke the tears. . . . I wept my fill, —

As ne'er before in four-and-twenty years.

*(Weeping ; leaning backwards ; tenderly.)*

Come now, my Eyolf! Come! why dost thou linger?

Already in the pine-copse coos the black grouse,

And from the tarn the mist its silvery mantle

Is slowly trailing; through the evening air  
It softly glideth, — to a lair more distant.  
Erelong each flower it lightly grazed will stand  
With dewy cheek, and gladdened think upon  
The dreamy vision fair which floated o'er it.

I see thee, Eyolf; see the wanton locks  
Which hasten laughingly in lusty concourse  
Adown thy neck; I see thy valiant arm, —  
Oft writs of death it traced, — but me it bids  
A loving cradle!

Eyolf now arrives, but is at first gloomy and distracted; but Hulda's devotion and caresses dispel his doubts, and he proposes to flee with her to Iceland, where there is a home for homeless love. During their interview Halgerda's voice is heard from the chamber, rousing her brother, Aslak, from his sleep. Soon Aslak appears on the stage, arrayed in the red mantle of the avenger; he challenges Eyolf to fight, and is slain. The following scene in its weird power and truthfulness reminds us not a little of an episode in Hawthorne's "Marble Faun." It is Miriam's and Donatello's walk from the Tarpeian rock after the death of the monk, when the common participation in the crime awakens a feeling of strength in both, and draws them more closely to each other. Hulda has not in words encouraged Eyolf to slay her husband and his father, but in her eye he read what prompted him to the deed. And feeling for the moment his estrangement from all the rest of mankind, he clings more closely to her who is the cause of both his happiness and his misery. In the foregoing acts an allusion has been made to Svanhildé, one of the queen's maids of honor, who will figure more prominently in the following acts.

The second act opens with an interview in the forest between Thordis and Gunnar, her lover. They have a little quarrel, because Gunnar says that he wants to be married very soon; Thordis begins to cry, and he very dexterously changes the subject. The queen and her maids of honor come wandering through the forest, and after them the brothers of the murdered Gudlejk, Thron and Arne Aslakson, — the latter wearing the avenger's mantle.

THROND.

That cloak is heavy, Arne Aslakson.

ARNE.

Heavier the words she spoke, who gave it,

Thrand, my brother.

In the sixth scene the queen proposes to play at fairies, — a game whose object it is to bring unhappy lovers together. Her maids form a long fairy chain, and with song and play they dance through the forest, weaving their charmed circles around Svanhildé, who they know is suffering, because Eyolf, her early lover, has deserted her. At last they bring Eyolf on the stage, and a third person, an unknown veiled woman, to witness their pledge of troth. The fairies again retire, and the three principal actors are left alone. The song of the fairies, with its lightly tripping metres, as well as the colloquy between Eyolf and Svanhildé, are full of lyrical passages, whose delicate petals with their fleeting fragrance will hardly bear the reverential touch of the translator. Eyolf, being thus unexpectedly confronted with his early love, first seeks to avoid her, and rises to go; but the unknown witness bids him speak. He touches upon mere commonplace topics, but the young girl's innocence and truthfulness sting him to the quick; the memories of his early happiness throng his mind, and half imperceptibly he glides over upon the very subject he is striving to avoid. In the fresh light of the morning, and in Svanhildé's presence, the power which binds him to Hulda, and the all-consuming fervor of her love, appear as dark as the night which has been the sole witness of their meetings.

. . . . I know a place

Where there is gloom and night; I also know

Where day abides. The sword . . . it loves the night;

But gladsome song . . . it is the gift of day . . .

Read me that riddle?

SVANHILDÉ.

Thou canst do it better.

EYOLF.

To choose; O, but to choose . . .

SVANHILDÉ.

Is not so hard.

EYOLF.

To him, whose mind was never forced to choose.  
Where deepest gorge doth separate two lands,  
Then he who longeth for the thither side  
Must risk the leap! And that thou think'st is easy.

SVANHILDÉ.

Thy words affright me, Eyolf.

EYOLF.

Come, Svanhildé,  
Look mildly on me — thus! Methinks we twain  
Once played together.

SVANHILDÉ.

Yes, from our childhood up.

EYOLF.

And with the friar read.

SVANHILDÉ.

For many years.

EYOLF.

Full lustily we trod the dance.

SVANHILDÉ.

At Yule-tide.

EYOLF.

But when I swung the sword, I stood alone.

SVANHILDÉ.

Oft I stood by and watched thee.

EYOLF.

Thou stood'st afar  
The day I Kollijam chased; he rated me  
A stripling.

SVANHILDÉ.

Alas! then thou didst roam afar  
On foreign warfare.

EYOLF (*wildly*).

Then I saw thee not.

SVANHILDÉ (*shrinking from him*).

But, Eyolf!

EYOLF.

Hush, be not afraid, but come!  
The bear will seek his den, for thee he feareth, —  
O swan-white bird, with spring upon thy pinions,

Swim to my shore, though steep and rough it be,  
 One spot it has full low, — with smooth, soft grass, —  
 Thou know'st the spot, — Svanhildé, thou hast found it.

SVANHILDÉ.

Hail, be our meeting in the early morrow !

EYOLF (*clasp ing her hand*).

Here on thy snow-white hand, where goes the blood  
 So fountain-clear, and pure as in the birch-grove  
 The song of birds, let it my Bible be,  
 On it I swear an oath.

SVANHILDÉ.

Thou swearest, Eyolf?

EYOLF.

An oath I swear, and little do I heed  
 The raven's cry, which flutters through our Eden.

The lovers then depart, having first appointed a rendezvous for the next evening on the hill near the king's dancing-hall. No one doubts, of course, that the veiled witness is none other than Hulda. At first she seems so stunned by the suddenness of the shock that she can hardly persuade herself of its reality; and the wild, confused rambling of her thoughts conveys perhaps as vivid a sense of her suffering as would a more passionate outbreak of grief and reproach. The effect of the scene, however, is, to our thinking, somewhat lessened by the fact that the poet, evidently believing that the congruity of a metrical utterance is not favorable to the exhibition of the wildest vehemence of emotion, has broken off his verse and made his heroine hurl forth her disconnected phrases (at least as far as the form is concerned) in plain prose. It may be hazardous to criticise this tendency, which we trace in many of Björnson's dramas, as similar instances abound in Shakespeare and other dramatic poets. But as far as we can judge, it is the more commonplace scenes, where no great passions are brought into play, which Shakespeare deems unworthy of the elevation of metre, while where he aims at peculiar sublimity the sympathetic throb of the rhythm is deemed only the more essential. In the stormy scene on the heath in "King Lear," it is the fool whose sentiments are fitly clothed in prose, while the king vents his frenzy in rhythmical utterances. A break in

the verse, or a sudden change of rhythm, often conveys a vivid sense of the newness of the thought or a startling suddenness of impulse, while a complete abandonment of the metrical form, as it were, puts the mind out of time and lowers it into a corresponding region of prose. We will quote a few passages of Hulda's soliloquy to give the reader a chance to judge for himself: —

## HULDA.

*(Stands for a while immovable, turns and looks at the water; cries out.)* The water! *(Rushes toward it, stops, and turns again.)* No, not thus — not yet! . . . . Whither am I going? . . . . Anywhere! *(Shrieks, runs, and pauses again.)* But where is the water? Ah — on this side! But it must not be on this side! For I — must go forward — straight forward! — Alas, my foot! I must not limp — no, not limp. Thus! Thus! — It pains me not — no, not at all! *(Sings.)*

I saw a white dove tremble  
On the dark expanse of thunder;  
From the earth the storm-wind hurled her,  
While it tore the waves asunder.  
I heard no scream or wailing,  
No sound I heard her utter;  
For she could rise no longer,  
She could but sink and flutter.

Now I must homeward go. So much I have to accomplish. — It was that cloak I needs must finish . . . . for to-night . . . . when on our journey we shall start. . . . Ah, but in sooth, that journey . . . . it will perchance not come to pass. . . . Methinks it is the wrong way I am treading . . . . It is not hitherward, my homeward way . . . . and . . . . I must hasten, for perchance there may be some one that's waiting for me. . . . Or, how fares it with me. . . . Ah, there is none who waiteth for me. *(Shrieks.)* Eyolf!

In the next scene Arne and Trond, the brothers of her murdered husband, appear, and in a singularly weird and disconnected dialogue she plots with them the death of her lover, Eyolf Finson. At evening, if according to his promise he should come, they agree to surround the house with their men and assail him. And not a Norseman, and least of all Eyolf Finson, would break his promise.

The third act opens with another interview between Thordis and Gunnar. They find the house empty, a weird gloom seems to brood over the place, and they are filled with strange forebodings. Thordis makes her lover promise to remain at the



door till midnight, and if Eyolf Finson should enter, to speak one word in his ear; and that word is — Svanhildé. Then Hulda comes and finds Thordis alone in the hall. She asks her who the man was who just departed. Thordis answers it was Gunnar, her lover.

HULDA.

Thy — ah! (*Drawing nearer.*) Then thou  
Art strong, that thou canst bear to love, Thordis, also. . . .

THORDIS.

In sooth, I knew not that it strength required.

HULDA.

Then — but a game, a play of troth — go, Thordis!  
Nay, tarry, do not leave me yet. — But speak . . .  
What was it thou didst say? Has he deceived thee?

THORDIS.

Who? Gunnar? No!

HULDA.

Nay, that I did not mean . . .  
He seems so strong and fair.

THORDIS.

O yes!

HULDA.

And didst thou  
Not miss him unto death, until he came?

THORDIS.

What meanest thou?

HULDA.

I mean, that in thy dream  
Thou saw'st him oft, ere thou his face hadst seen.  
Since then each word, each look thy hunger filled.

THORDIS (*wondering*).

Saw him before?

HULDA.

Dost not perceive? I mean,  
That ere he knew as yet that thou wast born,  
Thy life was passed in hungry yearnings for him, —  
Meanwhile for others thou didst ever work  
With face half turned, glancing to the door,  
If he should come. In every trifling thing  
Thou soughtest his approval, didst adorn  
Thy flowing tresses with the hidden hope  
That he should deem thee fair. With him,  
Who yet beheld thy thought, if not thy deed,

Thou found'st a guerdon for thy suffering.  
And when at parties maids and lusty lads  
The dance-croft trod, whilst thou sat'st lone, unbidden,  
The butt of pity and of silent council,  
Brief, sidelong glances, but of evil import ;  
Then thou didst dance with him, and, wild, you hurled  
Aside each couple, and the dancing-floor  
Grew large and larger, and the tones, they rose,—  
Took fire, and, flame-like, leapt toward the roof.

Go not, Thordis, — the night is drear and long. . . .  
Doth he to-night expect thee, Thordis ?

THORDIS.

No.

HULDA.

Then thou canst be at ease ! Sit down . . . and tell me, —  
How didst thou learn to love ? . . . Speak freely, Thordis.

THORDIS (*frightened*).

We played together, — wellnigh children both.

HULDA.

Thus early thou didst find him ?

THORDIS.

To the farm

He often came and oft we saw each other.  
One day at length he brought his skees,\* to slide,  
And asked if I would stand behind.

HULDA.

Thou didst yield ?

THORDIS.

Of course. And so we slid.

HULDA.

Adown the hillside ?

THORDIS.

So steep it was, and like the wind we flew !  
I screamed, — and hugged him fast, and begged  
For heaven's sake, that he should stay his speed.  
But nay, he could not ; and adown it went,

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\* *Skees* are a peculiar kind of snow-shoes, worn in Norway. They are from six to eight feet long, about the width of the foot, and the front end pointed and bent upward. On the under side they are smoothly polished, so as to glide easily over the snow. On the middle of each *skee* there is a band for the foot.

Adown the hillsides all, 'mid trees and mounds,  
The snow it whirled and filled our mouths and ears,  
And took our breath away, — it went and went  
Right down upon the sea.

HULDA.

Upon the sea ?

Ye rushed into the sea ?

THORDIS.

Nay, then we fell ;

And thereby both were saved.

HULDA.

Well, — and then ?

THORDIS.

Then up he sprang and asked me quick, if I  
Durst trust myself once more to such a brave  
And gallant steersman ; whereto I made answer,  
Yea, if he only runs not in the sea.

HULDA.

And then ?

THORDIS.

Well, then there's nothing more.

HULDA.

No more ?

Ye swore not ?

THORDIS.

No.

HULDA.

Have never talked about it ?

THORDIS.

No.

HULDA.

Come, Thordis, come ; I would but kiss thee, Thordis.

Scenes like this are, to our thinking, well worthy of a great poet. The more evanescent charm of the verses — that which depends as much upon the sound of the line as on its meaning — may be but imperfectly rendered in the translation ; but enough remains for the reader to discern the finely conceived contrast between the gloomy depth of Hulda's passion and the sunny cheerfulness of a love like that of innocent Thordis. At length Eyolf comes, Gunnar's admonition proves unavailing, he enters, the doors are locked, and he is once more in Hulda's power. The avengers, knowing full well the strength of Eyolf's arm, dare not meet him face to face, but prefer to burn him in their

own mansion rather than to shirk their duty. Eyolf has evidently come to give Hulda an explanation, and to bid her a last farewell. His sense of manliness rebels against the terrible power she has gained over him, while at the same time it forbids him to flee from her like a cowardly deceiver. But no sooner is he within the reach of her eye than his purpose dies within him, his old love returns with redoubled strength, and he can but curse his own weakness, while his tongue is powerless to speak the last decisive word.

Thou hast allured me, Hulda, — thrust me away !  
Ah ! I could curse thee, I could weep for thee.  
Two paces from thee — is like twenty miles.  
Here, here at thy right side  
I flutter, hoodwinked by thy morbid love.

Erewhile on board my ship, which rode at anchor,  
I stood, and saw her heave on the deep wave,  
And shake in wantonness her bounden sails.  
Then thought I, 'Tis the young hope of my life  
Here in the darksome bay of Hustad vik.  
Lo, the night wanes, and rife with wind the air, —  
Come, let us dare, and it will bear us over !  
Let men but wait and let them weep up yonder,  
Let in his chasuble the bishop swoon,  
Let them but call me villain, befoul my name  
With broken pledges, — every act of mine, —  
But out I'll start !  
True will I be, and free unfold my sail !

Come thou black, pale, strong-bosomed Hulda,  
Come, my Valkyrie, — come, board my bark ;  
Straight it shall lift its wing, and dart away  
Where ravens soar aloft o'er hungry war-cries.  
Then I shall happy be, — to naught I'll list !  
I will obey at last what speaks within me.

*(Strikes his breast.)*

This is the Saga of my heritage,  
Its runes I now must read, or I shall perish.

HULDA.

O worthy thou of love, — of death still worthy.

If thou a hundred years hadst yet to live,  
Thou couldst not comprehend the love I bore thee

For all I've thought this day, — for all I've suffered  
A life were small reward, — and therefore, Eyolf . . .

EYOLF (*pauses*).

Ah! in thy silence I do read thy thought.

HULDA (*cries out*).

O, tear thee from me, if thou hast the strength!  
For in thy mighty breast I something found  
Which upward lifted me, — I knew not whither.  
And fast I clutched it, — by the lofty heavens  
None so could clutch as I. Canst thou not lift me?  
Then there is danger that I drag thee under.

Now the flames from without begin to flap about the light-holes, the fire crackles, the smoke fills the hall, and Eyolf cries out,

“It chokes me, Hulda; whence this smoke and fire?”

And Hulda answers,

“’T is but the flame of my strong love for thee.”

Then the doors fly open, and there stands Arne clad in the avenger's blood-red mantle. “Now, Hulda, thou must come!” shouts he. But Hulda rushes into Eyolf's arms, the fire breaks in upon the stage, and amid the falling timbers and the wild shouts of the avengers the curtain drops.

We well remember the day when this drama was first enacted in the national theatre of Christiania, and it would be hard to forget the storm of applause which greeted its most impressive scenes, and especially its final grand catastrophe. When the curtain dropped the storm broke loose in real earnest, the greater part of the audience as with one impulse rose to their feet and with frantic shouts called for the author; and when he finally appeared on the stage, the enthusiasm knew no bounds. The collegians from the upper balconies screamed until they were hoarse, and even the grave citizens in the parqu岸 shared in the general clamor. We therefore do not hesitate in drawing the conclusion, that *Halte Hulda*, whatever may be its faults, must have touched a sympathetic chord in the Norsemen's hearts, and this is indeed in itself no small merit. Among its many beautiful details we will but mention a few which could not but strike home to every man born and bred among the mountains of Norway. Take, for instance, the

little love-adventure of Thordis, and her naïve answer to Gunnar's doubtful declaration. It certainly recalled to many a prosaic old "Philistine" the joyful days when he himself as a happy lover darted down over the glittering surface of the snow with his fair-haired maiden standing behind him on his *skees*, clutching him fast, and with mock fright bidding him stop his headlong speed. Then Hulda's grave musings in the pine-forest, the airy play of the young maidens in the birch-grove, and the bodeful mystery of the old legends, — how could a Norseman see and listen to all this without having his heart stirred, and feeling the warm current rush more rapidly through his veins? It was like a fresh whiff of the forest, a sudden glimmering vista of mountain and glaciers amid the din and bustle of city life.

It has been remarked, and not without justice, that Eyolf, with his wavering and apparent duplicity, can hardly enlist our fullest sympathy as a hero. But it is this very wavering, this vagueness of purpose, which in the drama is made a main-spring of action, which involves him in such hopeless complications, and in the end draws the inevitable doom down upon his head. And the author has never for a moment lost sight of this; Hulda clearly expresses it, when she says, —

"Again to meditate thou pausest, Eyolf?  
It is this meditation which hath murdered thee."

Hulda's character is indeed grand in its conception, and its development is forcibly marked in the progressive action of the drama. In its general aspect, as a nature of grand possibilities, hitherto cramped and subdued, but suddenly by the vivifying spark of love waked to a consciousness of its own power, it is not altogether a novelty to the world of fiction; but in her peculiar relation to the age and the society in which she is placed, that is, in her peculiar Norse aspect, Hulda is without a predecessor. And the same may be said of almost every character which Björnson's art has brought into being. Gunnar, Eyolf, and Thordis may be met with even to-day in every parish and fjord-valley in Norway; and although their faces seem so perfectly familiar, the fact still remains, that it is to Björnson they owe the prominent places they now hold within the national literature. And here, we think, lies the true greatness

of Björnson as a poet. For wellnigh a century Norway has been clamoring for a national literature, and every new author who appeared since the year 1814 has hastened to exhibit the *national* colors and to emblazon the beloved word upon his phylactery. Henrik Wergeland, as we have seen, spanned the earth and the sky, rose to heaven and descended to hell, all in search of his own precious nationality; and failing to find it, at last contented himself with declaiming upon the greatness of what he did but imperfectly understand, and which for want of a better phrase was called "the ancient, sea-engirdled Norway." Welhaven's voice had a truly national ring when he sang the praises of mountain, valley, and fjord; but Björnson saw in the rugged Norwegian peasant the true type of the national greatness, and pressing his ear close to the nation's heart he heard the throbs of its hidden emotions. And when he raised his voice and sang, every Norseman felt as if the voice were his own, as if the words had welled forth from his own inmost soul. Therefore in Björnstjerne Björnson has Norway found her national poet.

HJALMAR HJORTH BOYESEN.

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ART. VI. — THE RATIONALE OF THE OPPOSITION TO CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

IN Burke's "Celebrated Trials of the Aristocracy," it is related that when the young Lord Altham was a slave near Philadelphia, and was running away from his master, he fell in with a man and woman riding upon the same horse. The young lady had been forced to marry somebody against her will, and the pair of lovers, taking with them some money which was not their own, were hurrying away from an angry father and a deserted husband. They invited Altham to partake of their meal by the roadside; and while they were eating their pursuers came upon them and they were taken to Chester. The young woman and her lover were tried for theft and hanged. A hundred and fifty years ago this happened just outside of Philadelphia, quite as a matter of course, which reads oddly